



Dear Citizens,

This week I had the privilege to join Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) CEO Dr. Andres Alonso and Baltimore City School Board Chairman Brian Morris to announce the city's plans to increase investments in our school facilities. This is one of the most important issues for Baltimore and its communities.

We made the announcement at a very appropriate location: Highlandtown Elementary School. That particular school is a good example of what can go wrong, and what can go right, when we set out to improve the learning environments for our children.

What went wrong at this school?

It was an empty building for over 6 years as various school administrations changed priorities and budget commitments for renovations fell through. For some of that time, students were relocated all the way to Northern Parkway, miles away from the neighborhood. The children and families of the neighborhood were not being served.

What went right at this school?

BCPSS staff and contractors have become extremely focused on the task of renovating this school on-time. The planned 18 month construction job was completed in just 12 months. So, just in time for the start of the new school year, the young people in that community will walk through the doors of a refurbished and modern school.

Dr. Alonso, Chairman Morris and I are committed to moving forward with a plan to help other communities experience the same improvement. The plan is based on my priorities for improving school facilities for our public school students, and for all the residents of our communities.

My priorities center around three key themes:

- Dramatically increasing the capital funds available to build new schools and renovate existing ones.
- Offering increased support so charter schools and innovation schools have opportunities for adequate school facilities.
- Expanding the use of school facilities beyond the school day, so residents have better access to community resources for recreational, cultural, health and family support services.

First, it is long past time for us to build brand new schools in Baltimore City. It has been decades – over 30 years - since a new school has been built new from the ground up. The current financing model we have been working under - applying for State Public School Construction funds - simply will not get us where we need to be.

My goal is that we construct 7 to 10 new schools over the next 10 years.

The key to realizing this goal will be linking new school construction to our major City redevelopment projects in places like the East Baltimore Development, Inc. (EBDI), Poppleton, and Park Heights. Another key will be tapping into the many opportunities for creative financing and project delivery that now are available for constructing schools.

Opportunities like Tax Increment Financing (TIFs), privately financed Sale-Leaseback arrangements, or strategic land swaps all need to be explored. In partnership with BCPSS, we will hire the financial and development expertise to aggressively pursue these options for new school facilities in Baltimore. We will also work with BCPSS to explore new models and partnerships for maintaining our school facilities.

We must find a way to reduce the backlog of \$1 billion in deferred maintenance in our BCPSS buildings.

Secondly, I want to provide our charter and innovative schools better access to resources and expertise to address their facility needs. I want to expand on the partnerships already established by BCPSS and the Foundation Community by bringing City Government and Businesses to the table. The City is already working with the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers (ABAG) to help a handful of charter schools facing immediate facility needs to obtain access to expertise for site selection, financing and capital improvements.

There are plans to expand these resources to all the charter and innovative schools as needed. Through the ongoing Facilities Solutions Master Plan process, a number of school buildings have been or will be declared surplus. In many instances, these buildings, as they are transferred to the City, can serve as temporary or even permanent sites for charter and innovation schools.

A truly exciting example of this is the City's long-term lease arrangement with the SEED School of Maryland to utilize the former Southwestern High School Campus for Maryland's only public boarding school for 6th to 12th graders. Some of these surplus school buildings also potentially could be used as charter and new school incubators, specifically designed for

the first years of operation of a program until permanent space can be located.

Finally, it is critical that we help turn school buildings into overall community resources.

I've been a leader in developing the City's commitment to expand after-school programs, and there are further opportunities that the City, BCPSS and other partners need to explore. Our school buildings - all 180 of them - are important community assets, and access to them needs to be expanded beyond Monday to Friday from 8am to 4pm.

The City needs to step up, BCPSS needs to step up, and Foundations and Businesses need to step up. When we step up, we can provide residents with access to: gymnasiums, swimming pools, computer labs, meeting space, GED & job training classes, health clinics, day care, art classes, and much more.

A first step will be identifying funding to keep the buildings open, managed and maintained for the extra hours each week. Because each community has its own mix of needs and its own resources already providing services, the specific needs that each school facility can fill will vary from one neighborhood to another.

I will work with our non-profit and foundation partners to assess the needs and assets of each community area. We can develop a specific management plan to see how we can maximize the use of available resources in each community—schools, libraries, recreation centers, and non-profit service providers.

It is our responsibility to provide all of Baltimore's children the public schools they deserve.

As always, I am interested in what you think about our plan to make our city a dynamic place to LIVE, EARN, PLAY and LEARN. Please [email me](#) your comments or suggestions.

Sincerely,

Sheila Dixon
Mayor
Baltimore

Sign Up for the Mayor's Neighborhood Newsletter

News for Communities from Communities

In an effort to continue our close work with neighborhoods on public safety initiatives and strategies, Mayor Sheila Dixon has given the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods & Constituent Services the task of creating a public safety newsletter; one that is created for communities and by communities. One of the recurring themes that Mayor Dixon and the Neighborhood Liaisons hear in community meetings is the need to receive information from the City on public safety strategies and a means to share best practices being implemented in various neighborhoods with regard to crime.

The proposed newsletter will be a forum for communities to share those best practices and for the City to provide information about initiatives such as Operation Crime Watch, Clergy on Patrol, and others. It will require the collaboration of community groups like yours, the Police Department, the Mayor's Office, and our other public safety partners.

We are really excited to be able to send out our first newsletter. In order to receive it, you will need to send a blank email to the following address: NeighborhoodNews-Subscribe@lists.baltimorecity.gov. You will receive a confirmation email once you have signed up.

The Mayor believes that community engagement is critical to the success of taking back our neighborhoods, so I urge you to please work with us in sharing and showing your neighbors that together, we can make a difference.

9-11 Run to Remember

5K Run and 1 Mile Walk

Sep 11, 2007

Baltimore Police Headquarters
601 East Fayette Street
Baltimore, MD

7:00 a.m.

Entry Fees

\$25 if postmarked before Sept 1
\$30 thru Sept 10 (do not mail after 9/3)
\$35 Race Day

\$5 Discount for all law enforcement and fire agency employees.

For entry form and additional registration information, visit the [9-11 Run to Remember](#) homepage.

CityScaping State Center Stakeholder Meeting

August 25, 2007

10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Shake & Bake Family Fun Center
1601 Pennsylvania Avenue
Baltimore

The State of Maryland, the City of Baltimore and the State Center Development Team,

and the Neighborhood Alliance are actively planning for the future of State Center. On August 25th we will be brainstorming and sharing our greatest ideas and hopes for the future of State Center. Come and participate in this phase of CityScaping – “Vision” and consider the possibilities!

For more information visit www.statecenter.org

Baltimore Farmers' Market

Sundays Under the JFX

Baltimore Farmers' Market:

Everyone is invited to enjoy this one-of-a-kind shopping experience at economical prices. While strolling the market, guests can revel at the sight of the large quantity of the freshest fruits and vegetables, eggs, a variety of breads from Maryland area farmers, and delight in homemade treats. In addition, food vendors add spice to the market with cultural cuisine, popular pit beef sandwiches, pastries, cheeses, and gourmet treats.

Sundays, May 6 - December 23, 2007

8am to sellout, approximately noon

Holliday and Saratoga streets underneath the Jones Falls Expressway

Activities for the Whole Family

Special Events All Around Baltimore

The Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks offers activities for city residents and guests - educational hikes and walks, sports leagues, youth and senior activities, and fun for the family.

Please visit [Rec & Parks' Events Calendar](#) for dates and times.



TV25: The True View of Baltimore

You have received this email because you have requested email updates from the Dixon Report, or you have been identified as someone who may be interested. If you no longer wish to receive these updates, simply send a blank email to dixonreport-unsubscribe@lists.baltimorecity.gov.